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INDEX

Sr No	Topic	Page No
1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	STATEMENT OF PROBLEM	2
3	REVIEW OF LITERTURE	4
4	THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT	7
5	OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	10
6	HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY	11
7	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	13
8	SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY	16
9	LIMITATIONS OF STUDY	17
10	TENTATIVE CONCLUSION	18
11	TENTATIVE CHAPTER SCHEME	19
12	REFERENCES	20

1. INTRODUCTION

India, is home to 624 million active internet users in February 2021 and is expected to grow 970 million upward by 2025. Recent studies suggest that India saw increase of 47 million new internet users between 2020 & 2021. Another research hints 448 million social media users in India in January 2021 with increase of 78 million (+21%) between 2020 and 2021. These numbers are massive & it will not be any wrong to say that near to half of the Indian population today has access to internet on a computer system or a mobile device and this huge chunk of population is of easily accessible to brands of today's times who reaches out to them Digitally.!

On an average, an Indian spends 4.4 hours in a day on the internet while using their laptops & 3.1 hours on mobile phones. Mobile and computer system penetration complimented with economical internet data plans has led to increment in screen time in our country. These factors gave rise to more and more people to be easy accessing on the internet. This leads to the rise of digital marketing sector which is expecting to grow at 27% in 2021 & cross the INR 17,000 Crores mark. It is now given that there is a huge potential for any business to catch hold of their potential customers attention digitally with such significant figures of internet users.

Before the world went digital, marketing was through flyers, posters, hoardings, newspaper ads, television commercial, phone calls, radio and so on. It is of utmost importance for marketers to ideate new strategies since their target audiences have now shifted to personal electronic devices for their ever increasing needs. This paradigm shift allowed digital marketing to spearhead the new age branding & marketing. Digital marketing companies aim to land on personal devices of the consumers. Brands Advertisements and promotions targets to engage & interact with their identified market.

Digital Marketing campaigns appear in varied formats including video, display ads, and social media posts, blogs & articles, reviews and the latest addition being influencer marketing.. Brands take special marketing efforts to implement the AIDA model i.e create Awareness, drive Interest, induce Desire & lead to Action for the final Purchase of goods or services. Digital marketing helps you reach a larger audience than you could through traditional methods, and target the prospects who are most likely to buy your product or service. Additionally, it's often more cost-effective than traditional advertising, and enables you to measure success on a daily basis and pivot as you see fit.

The education sector in India was estimated at INR 9370 billion in FY18 and is expected to reach INR 7070 billion in FY19. Number of colleges and universities in India reached 39931 and 993, respectively, in FY19. There are 4100 undergraduate, 4951 postgraduate and 4,514 diploma courses in AICTE approved institutes. The country has become the second largest market for E-learning after the US. The sector is expected to reach INR 137 billion by 2021 with around 9.5 million users. In India, the online education market is forecast to reach ~ INR 602 billion by 2026

Looking at the size of the market and the money that is involved, education has now become an established business model for profit. Educational institutions have fully equipped marketing team which is responsible to make their brand visible to their prospects, educate them about the educational course they have to offer and eventually convert them into a paid application resulting in candidate selection & fees payment . These teams put efforts to market the educational institutions traditionally as well as digitally depending on the size of student intake and the its revenue.

All the above mentioned aspects has encouraged the researcher to dwell in deep and seek answers to understand the Influence of Digital Marketing in the Education Sector in India and come out with recommendations in future.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In light of the above, there is near to no research done till date on influence of digital marketing and extent of usefulness of its tool for business generation & sales for the education sector in India.

Digital Marketing is a widely used new generation marketing technique to create brand awareness, ensure brand recall and induce the audience to engage with educational brands resulting in business generation i.e. admissions for the said institutions.

These digital marketing activities need to be evaluated from return on investment perspective considering the variety and complexity of each of its tools. Each of these tools has different objectives linked to monetary or non-monetary goals. The researcher has worked close to nearly 5 years in the Education Sales & Marketing field and understands the importance of outcomes of this research study.

This research will be resourceful to all the sales and marketing professionals working for the education sector. The findings of the research will show a pathway to the digital marketing professionals in the education sector on to which of these tool work best and offer optimal return on investment. It will also recommend the factors students consider before enrolling in a educational institute which these digital marketers and top decision makers at the institutions must pay attention to.

This research aims to investigate and examine critical factors that affect & determine Digital Marketing efforts for Education Sector in India along with review of which tools serve best return on investment & Decision making factors that leads to final Educational Institution selection by a student

- What are the extensively used digital marketing practices that educational institutions follow to attract their potential Student
- Which are the best performing digital marketing practices and offer optimal return on investment
- What does a student look at before taking a decision on which college to choose for its degree/ post graduate program
- What are the problems that the educational institutions face which using digital marketing as the medium to reach out to their potential student

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is very little research done and material available on the selected research topic. Hence it is imperative for the researcher to conduct the study.

Yatin Jog & Trupti Dhote's white paper on **"Effectiveness of Digital Marketing In Education: An insight into Consumers Perception"** is a work or relevance for our study. The paper focuses on consumer's perception on digital communication in education sector and factors influencing the student decision related to academics. With a sample size of 150 students, the authors could conclude that educational institutions are making use of digital marketing tool, it talks about which tool the student community relies on and what influences their decision making. The papers on the other hand don't consider the cost to benefit aspect of the use of the digital marketing tool. The research was conducted with student community as their primary target audience in 2015, which was the introductory phase of digital marketing being used for as a supporting marketing tool, traditional marketing in primary focus

Afzal Basha, Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration Indian Academy Center for Research and PG Studies in her paper named **"A Study on effective digital marketing strategy in education sector in Banglore city"** in 2019 IJRAR February 2019, Volume 6, Issue 1. This study resulted in 62% of the respondents(150 Sample size of students) strongly agree & agree that digital marketing had an impact on selecting the education institution, 25% of responded are neutral and 13% disagree & strongly disagree that digital marketing never had impact on selecting the institution. This Study again considers the factors basis which students decision making is dependent on. The study is limited to Bangalore city students only and does not consider the aspects from the digital marketing team, the effectiveness of digital marketing efforts and its return on investment.

Sanjib Biswas's Article on **"Exploring the Implications of Digital Marketing for Higher Education using Intuitionistic Fuzzy Group Decision Making Approach"** in BIMTECH Business Perspective, Birla Institute of Management Technology reveals how Higher education institutions have adopted digital marketing over the years. The study finds out that identification of the needs, building of longterm relationships and engagement, and transparent communication with students have critical implications for Digital marketing in the context of higher education. The paper lists down various reasons why higher education institutions should engage in digital marketing, some of these reasons are brand positioning, customer outreach, micro level market segmentation & targeting, cost effectiveness & ease of operation. The Study was done on the expert panel of 7 members. This research studies the importance digital marketers give to cost

effectiveness but did not touch upon individual digital marketing tool and their respective cost effectiveness & return on investment.

Andriani Kusumawati's paper on **Impact of Digital Marketing on Student Decision-Making Process of Higher Education Institution: A Case of Indonesia,** IBIMA Publishing, 2019. The important aspect of this paper is to discover the process by which students in Indonesia use digital media & its importance in decision making process of choosing a university. This paper reveals that digital marketing provides a low cost communication, a good return on investment, and has an ability to reach a wider community as well as ability to display whole service range due to the digital capabilities. While the study mentions that Digital marketing offers good return on investment, it does not mentions which of the digital marketing tools offer good return on investment.

Karan Veer Narang & Bhuvnesh Kumar Sharma in their research paper "Rise of digital marketing in higher education industry in India" The study recommends that the prospect customers/ applicants want the institutes to reach them on digital platforms rather than the traditional sales team chasing them outside the education institutes. The applicants trust banner ads and websites of the institutes to a great extent in the selection of the best suited business schools for themselves. This is. a queue for the institutes to start pushing for higher digital visibility. Use of Social media, back linking, right use of keywords & hash is recommended for the institutes to start pushing for higher digital visibility. This study as well does not consider the return on investment angle which this research study aims at.

RESEARCH GAP:

In this study, the literature has been used to understand how and what factors are important for a student in decision making while deciding on an Educational institution The Study also intends to understand how the current situation looks - use of digital marketing for education and to discover the theoretical perspectives that are of relevance for the study.

The following research gaps were identified from the above literature referred:

1) Given that the digital marketing itself is comparatively new in India, There is no digital marketing tools that prove to be of use to educational institutions yet.

2) There is no study on variety of digital marketing tools and the return of investment that they offer to educational institutions in Mumbai.

3) Mumbai has ever growing student population since it is home to varied established education institutions, there is no study on the factor basis which students take admissions in these institutions.

4) The literature review does not consider the impact of digital transformation through change and innovation brought by education digital marketers.

5) The literature review focuses on respondents in Bangalore where impact of digital marketing while selecting the institution is covered. The study is limited to Bangalore city students only and does not consider the aspects from the digital marketing team, the effectiveness of digital marketing efforts and its return on investment.

6) There is no research yet done of difficulties Education institutions face while digitally reaching out to the potential students .

Thus from the literature we can confidently conclude that near to no research is done in the area of Influence of Digital Marketing in the Education Sector in Mumbai. Hence the researcher is attempting to fill this gap by undertaking this study.

4. THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

Theoretical Construct is an explanatory concept that is not itself directly observable but that can be inferred from observed or measured data.

Individual characteristics which are very subjective account to a construct, such as intelligence, obesity, job satisfaction, or depression; they can also be broader concepts applied to organizations or social groups, such as gender equality, corporate social responsibility, or freedom of speech.

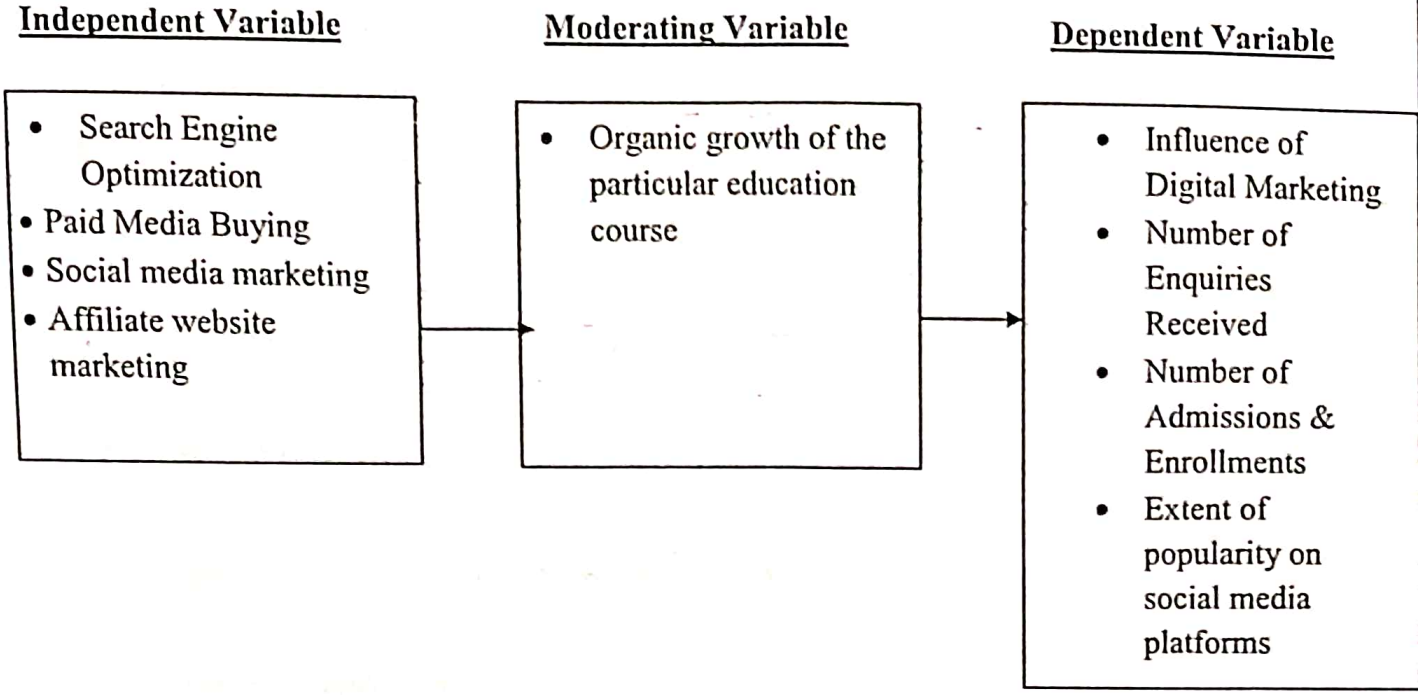
The literature review showcases that usage of digital marketing in education sector is now used extensively. Digital marketing is comparatively new in India, Prior to the influx of Digital marketing, Traditional marketing tools like newspaper ads, Education exhibitions, hoardings were used. The problem that the marketers faced was to evaluate and attribute the admission & form sales to the marketing activities that were conducted in that admission cycle. Digital marketing on other hand always had an algorithm to attribute a particular marketing activity and its effectiveness. Though the attribution was possible, there is still no set benchmarking of activities conducted and its return on investment.

There are educational institution which strategize & execute digital marketing activities for their category education, brand awareness & conversions (Form sales & admission), however the factors that affect student decision making is yet unexplored.

Education is now a serious business & businesses operate today for profit. With more and more educational institution now offering competitive educational options within the same brand name & ever increasing expenses, it is now the responsibility of the marketing & business development teams to optimize the budgets and give the best possible result in terms of admissions.

There is definite need for education institutions to adapt to Digital marketing. They need to understand that in the current competitive and heavily fragmented markets with new courses being launched & new institutions cropping regularly, they will have to enhance & better their digital marketing skills.

An Educational Institutions' capability to adapt to digital marketing & need to evaluate best performing activities is of utmost relevance in these times of ever changing digital landscape.


Independent Variable
Moderating Variable
Dependent Variable
• Search Engine Optimization
• Paid Media Buying
• Social media marketing
• Affiliate website marketing
• Organic growth of the particular education course
• Influence of Digital Marketing
• Number of Enquiries Received
• Number of Admissions & Enrollments
• Extent of popularity on social media platforms

IDENTIFICATION OF VARIABLES

Traditionally most established education institutions spend heavily on marketing during their admission cycles. Until a couple of years back, most of the marketing budgets were primarily spent on traditional marketing activities and very little was spent in digital marketing. Over the years there has been a change in trend, more and more education institutions are moving towards digital marketing. Traditional marketing was expensive and there was no guarantee and attribution of sale conversion. Whereas Digital marketing offered opportunities to these institutions to reach their specific target audience through internet operating mobile phones & computer systems in cost effective manner.

Digital marketing in education refers to use of varied marketing strategies, namely- Search engine optimization, Search engine Management – Google Ads, Paid Ads, Social media marketing, Affiliate marketing & much more. These digital marketing tools are put to action for increasing brand awareness and drive sales of application form which leads to admissions. Here the researcher wants to examine to what extent Education institutions are using digital marketing for form sales & Admissions, and what is their most preferred element of digital marketing which offers optimized return of investment.

To sum up,

1. **Independent Variables: (X)**

    - Search Engine Optimization

- Paid Media Buying
- Social media marketing
- Affiliate website marketing

In the literature review it has been found out that there is little data on to education institutions using digital marketing for business development, but no set standards & benchmarking is found.

2. **Mediating Variable: (M)**

- Organic Growth of a particular education course

3. **Dependent Variables: (Y)**

- Influence of Digital Marketing
- Number of Enquiries Received
- Number of Admissions & Enrollments
- Extent of popularity on social media platforms

5. OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

Digital marketing is comparatively new in India. Education sector in in our country has been predominantly dependent on traditional marketing activities for their awareness, branding which leads to admissions. The limitation of spending marketing budgets on traditional marketing activities was there was no set logic & algorithm to figure out the ROI of such expenditure. With influx of Digital marketing starting from 2015, more and more educational institutions have moved towards Digital marketing since is allows attribution of activities in lead generation, application form sales and eventually into admissions. There is near to no data that provides confidence to marketers to take a rational decision on allocating their budgets in digital marketing for various activities.

The primary aim of the research is to find the extent of digital marketing that educational institutions use in the current times and their effectiveness.

Following are the objectives of the research:

- To determine the usage of Digital marketing for business development in Education sector
- To identify key Digital Marketing tools which offer the best Return on investment
- To Understand the impact of Digital Marketing in Education Sector particularly on revenue growth
- To find the factors that influence decision making while a student selects his/her educational institute
- To investigate the problems faced by Educational Institutions in reaching out to potential Student through Digital Marketing
- To develop & recommend digital marketing activities which are must to be adopted for educational institutions to survive & grow in this highly competitive market.

6. HYPOTHESIS OF STUDY

The hypothesis framed for the study is as below:

Hypothesis 1:

H0: Digital marketing is not widely used in Education sector for Business development

H1: Digital marketing is widely used in Education sector for Business development

Hypothesis 2:

2A :

H0: The Digital Marketing tool of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) doesn't offer the best ROI

H1: The Digital Marketing tool of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) does offer the best ROI

2B :

H0: The Digital Marketing tool of Search Engine Management (Paid Media) doesn't offer the best ROI

H1: The Digital Marketing tool of Search Engine Management (Paid Media) does offer the best ROI

2C :

H0: The Digital Marketing tool of Social Media Marketing doesn't offer the best ROI

H1: The Digital Marketing tool of Social Media Marketing does offer the best ROI

2D :

H0: The Digital Marketing tool of Affiliate website marketing doesn't offer the best ROI

H1: The Digital Marketing tool of Affiliate website marketing does offer the best ROI

Hypothesis 3:

H0: Use of Digital Marketing in Education sector has no impact in revenue growth

H1: Use of Digital Marketing in Education sector has impact in revenue growth

Hypothesis 4:

H0: A student does not consider various factors before taking admission in a specific educational institution

H1: A student does consider various factors before taking admission in a specific educational institution

Hypothesis 5:

H0: Educational Institutions don't face any problems while marketing themselves digitally

H1: Educational Institutions do face problems while marketing themselves digitally

7. RESEARCH METHODLOGY

Research refers to the systematic method consisting of enunciating the problem, formulating a hypothesis, collecting the facts or data, analyzing the facts and reaching certain conclusions either in the form of solutions towards the concerned problem or in certain generalizations for some theoretical formulation.

Both primary and secondary data collection methods will be used. Quantitative type of research will be put to application. Pilot Testing will be done on population of Digital marketers working in education sector and/or Digital agencies serving education institutions in Mumbai.

Primary data would be collected through interviews, focus group discussions and distribution of questionnaires from 100 respondents who have knowledge and experience in Education Digital Marketing across Mumbai.

Secondary data will be collected from allied sources like internet, newspapers, reference books, Research papers, National & International journals government published reports etc

Focus Group Discussion: - Focus Group Discussion is an exploratory research technique which helps in providing deep insights into the field of research.

Interviews: - Interview techniques help and enable the researcher to get information directly and quickly from the respondent. Interviews will be conducted by asking open – ended and close – ended questions to experts in the Education Marketing

Questionnaires: - Questionnaires will enable us to ask specific questions in a short frame of time, which require concise and limited answers. Questionnaires will consist of both open – ended and close – ended questions. Responses will be recorded on numeric scales and analyzed with the help of different statistical tools. Questionnaires will be shared with existing students to understand what influences their decision making while selecting an educational Institute

Sampling

Non Probability Sampling technique will be used to collect data from the sampling units. Interviews, Surveys & questionnaire will be used on the population who are mid-level and senior level marketing heads or digital marketing agency account managers or strategists in case the work is outsourced to an agency. These targeted individuals have high level of expertise in the said field and the responses collected from them may result in consensus on varied research objectives.

Before conducting the actual research, a pilot run of 15 interviews will be done to verify the reliability of the questionnaire. With this pilot we will understand the exact dependent & independent variables

Digital Marketing in Education knowledge/information is available with a very limited section of the population. Under such circumstances it is fair to use judgemental sampling method where select experts will be called for focused groups, one on one interviews for data collection

In order to find these targeted and qualified respondents, the researcher will also use Snowball sampling where the respondent after being interviewed will be asked to identify one or more such people which may fit right for the research. This will resourceful in creating a pool of respondents for the research.

Sample Design:

a) Total Population: The total populations for this research study are Digital marketers working in education sector and/or Account heads/managers of Digital agencies serving education institutions in Mumbai.

b) Sample Size: The Sample size out of the total population would be 300 Senior Level Employees who are Marketing Heads, Team Leaders, and Marketing Strategists.

c) Sampling Unit: Employees

d) Sampling Technique: A non-probabilistic sampling technique

e) Sampling Method:

Judgmental sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher selects units to be sampled based on their knowledge and professional judgment. Judgmental sampling design is usually used when a limited number of individuals possess the trait of interest. In the given study, the samples having Digital marketing for education are very limited, hence the researcher selects Judgemental sampling. The researcher will also resort to Snowball Sampling method where the existing subjects/samples will provide referrals to recruit samples required for a research study. Education Digital Marketing is a closed knitted group, snowball sampling will enable the researcher to seek all the individuals in the group by seeking referrals from their existing subjects.

Statistical Tools

The following statistical tools have been used to study the Influence of Digital marketing in Education sector in Mumbai.

1. Chi Square
2. Multiple Regression Analysis
3. Factor Analysis
4. Reliability Analysis
5. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
6. Simple Percentage Method

1) **Chi-Square** is called as goodness-of-fit test. It is used to test how observed frequencies differ from expected frequencies. Chi-Square test between two variables has been used to find out the symmetric association between the variables.

2) **Multiple Regression Analysis** has been used to test the effect of independent variables on dependent variable. This allows researchers to assess the strength of the relationship between an outcome (the dependent variable) and several predictor variables as well as the importance of each of the predictors to the relationship, often with the effect of other predictors statistically eliminated.

3) **Factor Analysis** is a multi-variate analysis used to test the variables simultaneously. It is used in data reduction and data summarization.

4) **Reliability Analysis** has been used to test the internal consistency among the variables. Factor Analysis is a multi-variate analysis used to test the variables simultaneously.

5) **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)** has been used to test the equations of multiple regressions simultaneously.

6) **Simple Percentage Method** has been used where a percentage is used to determine relationship between the data series

8. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Basis the literature review, it is imperative that limited research done till date in the field of Digital marketing for education, primarily because digital marketing as a concept is comparatively new. Which essentially suggests that all the educational institution who invest little or huge in digital marketing for sales have no facts & Industry benchmarking basis which they make their marketing investment decisions.

This research will be useful to all educational institutions who are currently investing in digital marketing and also to those institutions that are yet to explore the world of digital marketing for business development. The research finding will equip the Marketing heads of the educational institutes to take a calculated decision on to which digital marketing tools to use to reap long term benefits in terms of sales, brand recall & engagement.

The outcome of the research study will act as a reference guide to educational institutions for their Digital marketing efforts & recommend the must use tools that gives best return on investment

10. LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The nature of the study is such that in involves senior level marketing heads of the education institutions. People with such expertise is rare find and hence we will have to conduct the research with constrain of limited sampling units.

This study involves focused group discussions with marketing heads of education institutions across India, i.e it will not cover trends and extent of use of digital marketing in institutions functioning in foreign land.

The research is though involves questionnaire which will seek business information about their yearly marketing plans, expenditure & results in the form of business generated on implementation of plans. Sourcing such confidential information may lead to resistance from the key stakeholders.

11. TENTATIVE CONCLUSION

Education Marketing is a billion dollar industry in India. Majority of mid & large sized educational institutions spend heavily in traditional & digital marketing in order to achieve their sales targets year on year. It is of urgent need to understand which digital marketing activities bring the most traction to their websites which with right counseling converts into admissions acceptance & fees payment.

These Education organizations want to evaluate the conversion and return on investment while spending on Digital Marketing activities. This research will recommend widely used Digital marketing activities which are economical yet best rewarding for educational institutions.

The Tentative conclusion that the researcher can draw is that digital marketing has a significant influence on the Education Sector in India. The conclusion may recommend tool that offer best return on the investment made in a digital marketing activity **OR** the research may conclude that there is no benchmarking to the investment to return logic for digital marketing in the education sector due to its subjective use

12. TENTATIVE CHAPTER SCHEME

Sr. No	Chapter Title
1	Introduction
2	Conceptual Background
3	Literature review
4	Research methodology
5	Data analysis and Interpretation
6	Findings
7	Suggestions and Recommendations
8	Scope for further studies
9	References

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